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“Very nice, the enemies are gone!” – Coming to Terms With GDR Sports Since 1989/90

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Abstract: When the SED regime collapsed, the lustre of East Germany’s gold medals still impressed the world and especially West German sports politicians. The road to the merger of the two sport systems represented a special case of German reunification, as in sports the West pined for learning from the East. But soon the dark sides of GDR sport became visible. The Ministry of State Security spied on the sportsmen and women, invaded their privacy and even recruited them as “unofficial collaborators”. The athletes had little or no chance to escape the doping programme forced on them by the state. Many sportsmen and women are still suffering from the long-term damage caused by this pharmacological abuse. Until today, attitudes towards GDR sport are ambiguous: while on the one hand regarded as repressive and unethical, it is on the other hand praised as a highly suitable institutional model for the future.

“Do Communists run faster?”¹ a West German sports publicist provocatively asked in 1968. Since the Olympic Games at Mexico City the same year – the first that saw the performance of a separate East German team – the small East German state succeeded in gaining more medals than its West German counterpart. “While failing politically in most sectors of economy and society, when it came to sports East Germany was on top of the world.”²

This stunning success story led to some exceptional circumstances when the challenge of German unification was imminent in 1989/90. With most parts of the SED-dictatorship being morally and economically discredited, East German people voted in their first free election on March 18th 1990 for a fast reunion with the West, implicating the take over of the West German constitution as

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¹ Knecht, (1969, p. 1).

² Möller (2004, p. 311).

well as the Western life style. Such, the so called “Aufbau Ost” was clearly destined to become a “Nachbau West”.³ But regarding sports, the picture was wholly different: When the SED-regime tumbled down, the glamour of its gold medals was still shining on. Especially West German sports politicians and officials were deeply impressed by the East German “Sportwunder”. The Minister of Sports Wolfgang Schäuble postulated in March 1990 to preserve the “achievements” of GDR sports, the president of the German national sports organization, the “Deutscher Sportbund” (DSB), Hans Hansen, fully agreed.⁴ The collapse of the GDR and its sports structures proved to be a lucky opportunity for many of West Germany’s professional clubs. Shortly after the fall of the wall East German sport stars in droves were crossing the inter German Rubicon and hired at West German clubs, encouraged by managers from the West, who, in acts of mere “sports piracy”, bought in complete East German national teams.⁵ After reunification, when the first joint Olympic team since 1964 was sent to the games of Albertville and Barcelona in 1992, East German athletes significantly contributed to an overwhelming success. At Albertville, for the first time ever since, the Federal Republic of Germany was catapulted into the top position of the Olympic ranking order.⁶ This triumph was accounted for as a “leistungssportlicher Vereinigungsgewinn”.⁷ But not only the East German sportsmen and sportswomen were seen as a great potential for the united sports nation. Above all, West German sports leaders hoped to finally get an inside view of the up to then carefully hidden “secrets” of East German competitive sports, especially concerning training programmes and medical expertise.⁸ In view of this unusual constellation – the West pinning for learning from the East – it shall be asked today, 17 years after unification, what are the outliving elements and images of the highly praised GDR sports systems.

Even if one would not subscribe to the view that GDR sports still “is alive”,⁹ the controversies on its meaning and effects surely are of vivid character. Conflicting interpretations have dominated the debates during the period of “the most recent contemporary history”.¹⁰ While GDR sports is on the one hand lauded for being a suitable institutional model for the future, other voices are

³ That means the structures of the West simply should be reproduced. Land; Willisch (2005).

⁴ “Schäuble will Erfolg des DDR-Sports retten”. FAZ, 22.3.1990; “Gemeinsamer Fahrplan DTSB/DSB”. Neues Deutschland, 6.4.1990.

⁵ This was true for handball and cycling. See Braun (2006, p. 355).

⁶ At the Olympic Games in Calgary in 1988 the FRG had only reached the 8th place. (Kluge, 2004, p. 222).

⁷ That means a success in competitive sports due to German unification. Knecht (2003, p. 242).

⁸ To the question of secrecy surrounding the GDR competitive sports see the article of René Wiese in this issue.

⁹ Erbach (2006).

¹⁰ Schwarz calls the historical period from 1989/90 up to the present as the “most recent contemporary history”. Schwarz (2003, pp. 5-28).

emphasizing the dark sides of this sports system which ruthlessly inflicted mental and physical damage on its athletes.¹¹

Imitating the East – Institutional transfer in sports

The spread of nostalgia among East Germans during the 1990s, generally referred to as “Ostalgie”, last but not least revived the images of the East German sport stars, with Katarina Witt embodying the most unforgettable icon.¹²

This attitude was often looked down upon by West Germans as a sentimental and irrational attitude. But long before East Germans rediscovered their past, West German sports officials had already behaved very “ostalgical” in the summer of 1990: The Unification treaty between the two Germanys, laid down in August 1990, fixed the continuance of certain scientific institutions the West regarded as being responsible for the enormous Olympic success of the now dying GDR: among them were the “Forschungsinstitut für Körperkultur” (FKS) at Leipzig as well as the “Doping-Control-Laboratory” at Kreischa near Dresden.¹³ This paragraph at once was harshly criticized by members of the East German civil rights movement, as there were already rumours and substantial hints on the doping activities of these institutions.¹⁴ Looking back two years later, members of the Ministry of the Interior (responsible for sports) and the DSB mutually blamed each other for holding the responsibility for this overhasty step.¹⁵

The controversial preservation of the two institutions of “secret sports research” can only be explained if one takes into account the inferiority complex of West German sports since the end of the 1960s, its impression of “falling far behind its Eastern neighbour”.¹⁶ Not only training methods, but also the handling of sports medicine was regarded as unprogressive. While pharmacological manipulation was never openly discussed in the GDR, West Germany experienced an intense debate following the Olympic Games of 1968: “Are we raising monsters?” the discus thrower Brigitte Berendonk publicly asked after her shattering experiences at Mexiko-City, pointing out the wide-spread medi-

¹¹ Krebs (2000, p. 172).

¹² Katarina Witt co-hosted the popular “GDR-Show”, aired in the autumn of 2003 by RTL network.

¹³ It also included the “Forschungs- und Entwicklungsstelle für Sportgeräte” (FES) at East-Berlin. See Einigungsvertrag, Kapitel VII, Artikel 39, in: von Münch, Ingo, Die Verträge zur Einheit Deutschlands, München 1990, p. 65f.

¹⁴ Experts of the FKS like Prof. Buhl had openly admitted that they had been the persons who decided if and when a drug had to be applied. “Doping aus Fürsorge”. Süddeutsche Zeitung, 15.2.1990.

¹⁵ “In der Medaillenforschung ist die Vergangenheit unvollkommen bewältigt”. FAZ, 14.3.1992.

¹⁶ Knecht (1975, p. 1132).

cal manipulation in international sports.¹⁷ Prior to the Olympic Games at Munich in 1972, the West German coach Hans Jörg Kofink warned that the expected performances could only be enhanced by drug usage and that such a custom could not be regarded as ethical.¹⁸ On the contrary, politicians like Wolfgang Schäuble, the then-head of the German parliamentary committee for sports, explicitly appreciated pharmacological “support” as a serious option.¹⁹ In the course of this public debate, the Cold War and especially the inter German rivalry was used as an argumentative weapon pro-doping. The West thoroughly noticed that in the aftermath of Montreal 1976 – with the sensational success of (visibly doped) East German swimmers – a lot of sports doctors of the FKS were awarded prestigious national prizes. “Equality of opportunity with the East” was the slogan the proponents of doping were using to convince their opponents.²⁰

Anyway there was an overwhelming interest in learning scientific news from the East. Because of this, the star of a congress of sports doctors held in Freiburg i. Breisgau in 1976 was a sports doctor who had fled from Halle/Saale: Dr. Alois Mader was holding the “most attended lecture with the shortest title: Anabolica – while the auditorium was crowded with sports doctors, officials and coaches – expectantly holding pencils and sheets of paper in their hands.”²¹ The sympathy towards the achievements of the sports medicine of the GDR was so strong, that even the obvious negative symptoms were dismissed as irrelevant: “In the East women do get along with male voices without problems – because in the GDR there is social security,”²² the West German sports doctor Dr. Wilfried Kindermann explained. For the East German sports leadership it was of course a living nightmare that an East German doctor was encouraging the class enemy to follow the own path of success – consequently the Ministry of State Security (MfS) was given the task of defaming Dr. Mader and isolating him socially.²³ In the following years different doctors and coaches from the GDR escaped to the West and had a strong influence on the doping scene of the FRG.²⁴ During the whole period of the Cold War, the FKS at Leipzig seemed to Western experts as a “mystical miracle”, far out of their reach.²⁵

¹⁷ “Züchten wir Monstren?” *Die Zeit*, 5.12.1969.

¹⁸ Singer; Treutlein (2006, p. 62).

¹⁹ Deutscher Bundestag, Stenographisches Protokoll über die Anhörung von Sachverständigen in der 6. Sitzung des Sportausschusses am Mittwoch, dem 28. September 1977, Bonn 1977, p. 101f.

²⁰ Knecht (1976, pp. 1175ff.). Reaching “equality with the West” is the very argument the protagonists of GDR Sports are using to justify their former doping practices. Erbach (2006).

²¹ “Auf der Suche nach der Menschlichkeit im Sport sichtlich überfordert”. *FAZ*, 26.10.1976.

²² Ibid.

²³ BStU, ZA, MfS 10165/79, 272.

²⁴ Singer; Treutlein (2006, p. 153; p. 285f.).

²⁵ “Bisher war hier kein Fremder”. *Der Spiegel*, 22.1.1990.

Given this fascination, it was no surprise that West German sports politicians sought for the preservation of FKS and Kreischa in the united Germany. But shortly after the Unification Treaty was signed, new disclosures about the doping practice of the GDR led to a public scandal. Instead of preventing drug usage, Kreischa conducted tests that had to make sure that all traces of doping had vanished at the moment the athletes were travelling to international competitions.²⁶ „We didn’t want to get a washing machine for athletes pumped up with drugs”, Hans Hansen had to defend himself a few days before unification on December 1990.²⁷

As if this was not trouble enough, the staff of FKS and Kreischa was soon accused of being closely entangled with the Ministry of State Security. Not earlier than now West German politicians slowly realized that political repression had been a considerable fact of life within the GDR sports apparatus. In 1991 the FKS was incorporated into a newly founded “Institut für Angewandte Trainingswissenschaft” (IAT). But meanwhile this was seen as a politically delicate procedure – the foundation ceremony was ignored by the politicians of the Ministry of the Interior, the Saxonian regional government as well as the magistrate of Leipzig.²⁸

Leipzig University, that was designated to supervise the IAT institutionally, refused to cooperate. The governor of the university Gerald Leutert criticized, that there are “people in the West who seek to win medals regardless of who their partners are!” – with this remark he referred to the many “informal collaborators” of the Ministry of State Security inside the new “IAT”.²⁹ Today IAT and Kreischa have stepped out of the long shadow of their past – what remains is the fact that these institutions, which can be characterized in the words of a journalist as “GDR Sport minus ideology minus doping”³⁰ are now serving very well the ends of West German competitive sports. So at last, unification brought a fruitful innovation to the West German sports system.

Another debate focused on the preservation of the so called “Kinder und Jugend-Sportschulen” (children’s and young people’s schools) that had been a reliable talent hotbed for the GDR sports system. When after the fall of the wall the oppressive sides of these schools became obvious, the public authorities flinched from integrating them into the West German education system. But after the disappointing performance of the West German team at the Olympics of Sydney 2000, the now president of the “Deutsche Olympische Sportbund” (DOSB) Dr. Thomas Bach, then-vice-president of the IOC, openly admitted:

²⁶ This procedure was admitted by the head of the Kreischa laboratory, Dr. Claus Clausnitzer. “So wurde die negative Probe garantiert”. *Die Welt*, 4.12.1990.

²⁷ “Wir wollten doch keine Waschanstalt für mit Doping vollgepumpte Athleten übernehmen”. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 8.12.1990.

²⁸ “Sport zeigt Flagge”. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 13.3.1992.

²⁹ “In der Medaillenforschung ist die Vergangenheit unvollkommen bewältigt”. *FAZ*, 14.3.1992.

³⁰ *Berliner Zeitung*, 22.8.1996.

The enormous effects of the training inside the children's and young people's schools have been neglected far too long. A modified version of this East German schools will be the necessary precondition for the promoting of our future talents.³¹

So these schools are enjoying a renaissance today: called "elite sports schools" and financed by the fund "Sports and Economy", 21 one of them are situated in East Germany and five of them in Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria and Baden-Wuerttemberg.³² Wolfgang Tiefensee, the former mayor of Leipzig and one of the chief promoters of the idea of bringing the Olympics to Leipzig in 2012, is one of the most prominent mediators between the GDR past and the needs of today's sports policy. He interprets the come-back of the sport schools as an example of successfully coming to terms with the past:

The sports schools have been preserved and they now are the fundament for our future Olympic champions. Doping, Stasi,³³ elite schools – this must not be forgotten or hidden away. But I claim that we are succeeding in (...) demonstrating to the IOC how one can handle transparently this delicate and difficult issue. How you can overcome a dictatorship while walking on familiar grounds, with your head up high, without losing your face.

As the Olympics in Athens in 2004 have shown, the elite schools have proven to be solid and successful training facilities for a new generation of top athletes.³⁴ So as a matter of fact it is East German knowledge and methodology that is pushing forward the sporty success of the FRG.³⁵

Shadows of the "Golden Kids"

In May 2006 a discussion aired on TV focused on the question if ice skater and coach Ingo Steuer,³⁶ who had been an "informal collaborator" of the Stasi, could be a suitable person training the national Olympic team. After a while, Wolfgang Leonhard, one of the fiercest veteran critics of communism, asked in a snotty voice why he had to discuss the fate "of an ice skater", people should rather concentrate on the "real gruesome crimes" of communism.³⁷ This remark is the typical expression of an attitude – shared by the public and many historians – that sports and its related phenomena do not belong to the serious subjects of life, let alone issues of historical research. The lack of attendance for sports history simply ignores the fact that sports has always been an essential

³¹ Knecht (2001, p. 451).

³² Deutsches Olympisches Institut (1999).

³³ Synonym for Ministry of State Security.

³⁴ 60% of the medals won at Athens were gained by alumni of these schools. "Suche nach dem Optimum". Berliner Zeitung, 9.9.2004.

³⁵ Knecht (2001).

³⁶ The case of Ingo Steuer is examined by Fischer-Solms (2006).

³⁷ "Die Schatten der Stasi". ARD, 9.5.2006, 22.45 Uhr.

part of the self-conception of dictatorships.³⁸ The sports system of the GDR was not only highly subsidized by state and party, but also a focal point of dictatorial intervention: The Ministry of State Security spied on the sportsmen and women, invaded their privacy and recruited them as "unofficial collaborators" so that they could keep their sports colleagues under observation. The athletes had little or no chance to escape the doping programme forced on them by the state. Even today, many sportsmen and women are still suffering from the long-term damage caused by this pharmacological abuse.³⁹

After the merge of the sport organizations a lot of former "informal collaborators" of the Ministry of State Security entered the national sport committees of the joint NOK and DSB. This was partly due to the fact that one year after the fall of the wall the knowledge concerning personal guilt was limited. West German officials had to rely on the hearsay when cooperating with their Eastern counterparts. Today it sounds adventurous how Hans Hansen sent out emissaries to the "Wilde East" – for example Wernigerode in Thuringia – to interview the East German populace about the character of the then-head of the GDR sports mass organisation, the "Deutscher Turn- und Sportbund" (DTSB), Martin Kilian.⁴⁰ But this inquiry was by no means characteristic. As it seems West German officials mostly did not really want to get into all the compromising details from the past of their East German "Sportsfreunde" – as there was a strong feeling of solidarity these days, pure joy of becoming one sports nation again, and of course the West Germans did not want to act the big shot.

When first there was a lack of valid information, this is no longer true since the files of the Ministry of State Security are open to everyone today. But nowadays, the sports organizations simply fail to confront themselves with the more inconvenient facts of the past. Only seven of the 35 Olympic national sports organizations voluntarily underwent a check-up by the "Birthler-Behörde" concerning the employment of former collaborators of the MfS.⁴¹ While the character of GDR sports as being a state-run apparatus was the precondition for its close entanglement with the MfS – it is now the autonomous position of sports within the framework of state and society that allows its functionaries to decide whether or not they want to throw light on the past (employees of the public service do not have this freedom of choice, as they are automatically screened by the Birthler-Behörde.)

The failure of the sports organizations to take appropriate responsibility for the considerable injustice done by the former regime has a harmful effect: the victims do not know whom to turn to when searching for the responsible per-

³⁸ The study of Schroeder on the "SED-Staat" completely ignores the issue of sports. Schroeder (1998).

³⁹ Spitzer (2005); Delow (2003).

⁴⁰ "Sonntagsreden nicht mehr gefragt". Süddeutsche Zeitung, 15.12.1990.

⁴¹ Information given by Herbert Ziehm, official of the Birthler-Behörde, at the conference "Große Hoffnungen – verspielte Chancen", 12.11.2005, Universität Potsdam.

sons for their pain. “Was it all done by ghosts?” a sportsman asked, who lost his job and career after being denounced by the MfS of having “dangerous contacts to the West.” The national sport organization’s unwillingness of coming to terms with the past has turned out to be good for nothing: Instead of following the difficult but at least dignified path of self purification, the sports bodies are now – by their own fault – the object of an endless chain of uncoverings by the press, with some journalists very pleasurably quoting from personal dossiers inside the MfS files. Sensation has taken the place of an objective and intellectual debate. As there is still so much turmoil concerning the past, the recent amendment of the “Stasiunterlagengesetz”, the law concerning the accessibility of the MfS files, has explicitly allowed to check prominent sport functionaries with respect to their former relationship to the MfS.⁴²

Another crucial point of the GDR past is the doping programme forced upon athletes.⁴³ Recently some East German athletes asked for deleting their “poisoned records” out of the national champions’ lists. But the sport organizations are very reluctant to meet these requests.⁴⁴ At last there has been a half-hearted compromise: the name of the athlete is replaced by a little star, while the (doped) record is still registered in the sports annals.⁴⁵

While sports leaders like Manfred Ewald and Manfred Höppner were convicted for their share of responsibility in the “processes at Berlin Moabit” in 2000/2001, it took until Christmas time of 2006 before an amid settlement between the DOSB and the victims of the forced doping programme was found concerning compensation.⁴⁶

What is the difference between those athletes severely damaged by pharmacological abuse and other categories of “victims of the SED-regime”?

When the wall came down and the victims of the regime could make themselves heard publicly for the first time, it was of course not the athletes that arose immediate attention. Politically and religiously oppressed people, victims of the disappropriation policy, parents that had been separated from their children for political reasons and many others spoke out on their sad life of suffering for the first time. Most of them had, because of an intellectual decision or a shocking experience, at one point or another in their lives turned into opponents of the regime.

On the contrary, the GDR top athletes had been well integrated, even privileged elements of the political system, partly they even had contributed to raise its international reputation. So at first glance for many people it was not easy to understand how a person acting conformable and supporting nevertheless is to

⁴² “Stasi-Unterlagen: Kein Schlussstrich Gesetz”. Tagesspiegel, 30.11.2006.

⁴³ Knecht (2002, p. 106).

⁴⁴ “Von der vergifteten Sportgeschichte befreien”. FAZ, 13.4.2006.

⁴⁵ “Ein einsames Sternchen”. taz, 8.5.2006.

⁴⁶ On this subject see the article of Michael Barsuhn in this issue. “Jenapharm entschädigt Dopingopfer”. Tagesspiegel, 22.12.2006.

be regarded as a victim of the regime – the case of GDR athletes, as Hockerts put it, is irritating the usual “dichotomy of the culprit and the victim”.⁴⁷

There are further factors that hampered the recognition of doped athletes as being victims the GDR dictatorship. It took very long, almost ten years, until the system of the forced doping programme was historically analysed; the physically damaged athletes also very late decided to form a representation of interest while other SED-victims for long had formed their lobbies.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the physical damage for the most part could be diagnosed only years after unification.⁴⁹ The national sport organizations showed little or no interest to start a dialogue with the doping victims. At last the victims themselves frequently lacked the willingness and courage to step forward and express their concern. This reluctance is due to the fact that the milieu of former protagonists of GDR Sport still defames such persons as “traitors” who dare to publicly talk about the “secrets of GDR-Sports”. Medal winning swimmer Jörg Hoffmann from Potsdam, who after seven years of doubts at last conceded the drug usage, explained: “Those who talked about this were treated like turncoats at once.” The anti-doping-activist Dr. Werner Franke sees “shame” as well as “fearing the anger of former sports comrades” as the decisive corner stones in the wall of silence.⁵⁰ Clearly, the mentality formed by the “state secret” named GDR sports has not yet loosened its grip on the persons concerned.

Dynamo – A case of “Damnatio Memoriae”

With the crumbling of the GDR sports system after 1989 East German sports clubs had to face troubled times: gone were the substantial financial funds supplied by the state, gone were many sport stars who preferred the exodus into the golden West.

The clubs of the former sports union Dynamo that had been sponsored by the Ministry of State Security, were facing an ambiguous heritage: The Berlin football club BFC Dynamo on the one hand could proudly look back on holding the championship from 1979 up to 1988. On the other hand it had the negative reputation of being a financially pampered “Stasi club”, privileged by its greatest fan, the head of Dynamo and Minister of State Security Erich Mielke.

Above all, the BFC was suspected of manipulating the results of matches by bribing the referees. Not only the fans of other clubs kept on complaining about

⁴⁷ See Hockerts (2002, p. 64f.).

⁴⁸ The “Doping-Opfer-Hilfverein e.V.” was founded in 1999.

⁴⁹ Spitzer (1998).

⁵⁰ “Es stresst mich einfach, immer zu lügen.” Berliner Zeitung, 16.10.1997; “Einigung mit Jenapharm”. Berliner Zeitung, 18.12.2006.

the swindle, even the central committee of the SED discussed the problem.⁵¹ In face of that image the BFC quickly tried to get rid of all symbols of the past after the fall of the wall. The club was in 1990 renamed in “FC Berlin”. Yet the club never could repeat its success and got stuck in the regional league. But in 1999 there was a change of mind: the officials decided that taking the emergency exit out of the club’s history perhaps had been a bit overhasty – and so the old name Dynamo was adopted again. 125 out of 135 possible votes followed this decision, there was cheering in the club house when the result was announced. Jürgen Bogs, a former coach, commented: “We did achieve a lot back then and should stick to this tradition.”⁵² But a new discussion about the club’s controversial past was just around the corner: It started when in 2005 Dynamo requested to decorate its jerseys with three stars – an honour reserved for those clubs who held a perennial championship. Up to then only the FC Bayern München was granted the privilege of wearing the stars. But the German Football League refused Dynamo’s demand, arguing that only championships after the introduction of the “Bundesliga” would count – a decision that excluded not only the West German champions prior to 1963 but also all East German champions. Although the League tried to assure the public that there had been no “political considerations”, an immediate storm of protest by East German fans moaned about a severe case of deception of the “East German people”.⁵³ Even the press speculated that the crucial but not openly discussed point in the whole “Star Wars” affair had been the question if championships “gained with the assistance of the Ministry of State Security should be rewarded at all.”⁵⁴

The ice-hockey team of SC Dynamo Berlin was facing similar identity problems after 1989/90. Fifteen times the SC had been the GDR champion – although this was due to a scurrility of GDR sports history. After the SED had decided to concentrate on the promotion of only certain kinds of sports in 1969,⁵⁵ nearly all ice-hockey teams were regarded as superfluous and were dissolved. Only the SC Dynamo Berlin and the SG Dynamo Weißwasser were granted their existence – until 1989 the two clubs were doomed to play against each other in the “smallest league of the world” to please ice-hockey fan Erich Mielke. Each year one of them was the lucky champion – while the other automatically carried the red lantern – a Kafkaesk scenario.

⁵¹ Vgl. Zusammenstellung von Informationen zur Problematik der Schiedsrichterleistungen und -verhaltensweisen im Zusammenhang mit den Spielen des BFC Dynamo, der SG Dynamo Dresden und dem 1. FC LOK Leipzig in der Saison 1983/84. SAPMO DY 30 IV 2/2.039/251, 88-92. The national football organization warned that the “hatred against the BFC is visibly growing”. Ibid, 92. See Braun; Teichler (2003, pp. 573ff.).

⁵² “BFC Dynamo wiedergeboren”. Berliner Zeitung, 4.5.1999.

⁵³ “Griff nach den Sternen”. Berliner Zeitung, 7.4.2005.

⁵⁴ “Kringel oder Bälle”. Berliner Zeitung, 7.4.2005.

⁵⁵ Teichler; Reinartz (1999, pp. 55-79).

After 1989 the SC Dynamo like the BFC sought a short escape route out of history; the club was renamed into “Berlin polar bears”. The president Helmut Berg declared Dynamo a “faux-pas-word”, old photos, insignias and banners were accounted for as taboo and hidden away in the closet, fans wearing old Dynamo jerseys were refused to enter the stadium. Only when the new Canadian coach Pierre Pagé arrived in 2002, a revival of the club history was allowed. His German co-Trainer Hartmut Nickel showed relief about the Canadian *laissez-faire*: “We would not have dared to do so on our own. Everybody would have called us the unconvincible adherers of nostalgia who above all love marching around the stadium while carrying red banners.”⁵⁶

Today the old jerseys are produced again for the young fans, the team quarters are again decorated with medals and knick-knack of the 1960s and 1970, on the wall the Dynamo emblem is hanging side by side to the “polar bear head”, the new icon. The very popular East German band “Puhdys” has recorded the club’s anthem – an evidence of the club’s deliberate cultivation of an East German identity. So at last, after a short period of “*damnatio memoriae*” both clubs returned to their Dynamo roots – even if that means to put up with discrimination. Nine year old kids training on the Dynamo premises are not seldom verbally harassed as “Stasi Kids”⁵⁷

Rivaling memories

“Very nice, the enemies are gone,”⁵⁸ the president of the West German NOK Willi Daume shouted in November 1990 in view of the fact that the front lines of the Cold War simply had vanished and a German unity in sport was imminent. It nearly seemed a little weird and spooky how the East German NOK, who over decades had struggled with its West German pendant in the fields of prestige, medals and ideology, gathered for its “last dance” on 17th November 1990. At this meeting, the dissolution of the NOK was declared, the organization quietly stole away from the stages of sports as well as politics.⁵⁹

But as this article has pointed out, East German Sports, its achievements and advantages as well as its sometimes brutal methods are still a matter of heated debate in contemporary Germany. There are several conflicting images: At one moment GDR sports appears to be a bright promising institutional model for the future, while the next moment people get a glance at the severe injustice and harm inflicted in the name of it. GDR sports is being remembered in very different ways by very distinct social groups and agencies. First there are the

⁵⁶ “Unter weinroten Fahnen”. *Berliner Zeitung*, 19.4.2005.

⁵⁷ Information of the president of the BFC Dynamo, Mario Weinkauff at a conference in Berlin, 28.6.2006.

⁵⁸ “Wie schön, die Feinde sind verschwunden”. *Deutsches Sportecho*, 19.11.1990.

⁵⁹ “Das NOK der DDR nimmt still Abschied”. *FAZ*, 19.11.1990.

officials of the regional sports administrations in East Germany, who 17 years ago have been officials of the DTSB. They often have a clear positive picture of the past. When celebrating the 15th birthday of the “Landessportbund Brandenburg” in September 2005, the people attending the meeting in Potsdam were in fact celebrating the “happy times back in the GDR” and the merits of the DTSB. On the contrary, state-sponsored institutions like the Birthler-Behörde and the “Stiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur” use to focus mainly on the issue of repression. Since the 1990s various historical studies have been published that cover a wide range of topics like serious sports, doping, but also every day sports and aspects of the social life of the athletes. This analytical approach is countered by former protagonists of GDR sports, who hold up high the remembrance of a “flourishing sporty landscape” now and forever gone.⁶⁰ One can only guess which of the voices in this dissonant choir will be the loudest, when the calendar sheets will mark the 50th birthday of the DTSB in April 2007. One thing can be taken for sure: While members of the one party will grasp the opportunity to enter the podiums and remind the audience of the inhuman aspects of a dictatorial and centralized sports system; the others will think of the age of success back in the “Sportwunderland GDR”.

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⁶⁰ Kluge (2004, p. 222).

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